



Session update from Olympia

February 4, 2011

Senate passes bipartisan plan to help close current-year budget gap

The Senate today approved [ESHB 1086](#) a budget reduction plan that, when combined with action taken during a special legislative session in December, closes more than \$900 million of the \$1.1 billion shortfall in the remainder of the 2009-11 biennium. The Senate plan makes \$255 million in spending reductions and \$122 million in fund transfers. This budget must be balanced by the close of the fiscal year that ends June 30. To view the details of this proposal in a summary format, side by side with the Governor's proposal and the House proposal, click [here](#).

Broadly, I worked hard to save the Basic Health Plan (more below), ensure Working Connections Child Care was funded, and to preserve interpreter services. Working Connections Child Care helps families with low incomes pay for child care while they work or meet WorkFirst participation requirements, and interpreter services are invaluable to our clinics and primary care doctors who need translation to properly treat patients. Locally, our proposal, unlike the others, did not cut or eliminate the Street Youth program that funds Crosswalk. It also includes funding for Continuum of Care and Child Advocacy Centers, and restores funding for operation of a toll-free line that assists families in learning about and enrolling in Apple Health for Kids, which provides publicly-funded medical and dental care to needy families. Additionally, we built-in funding that will help mitigate cuts to Federally Qualified Health Center's like Community Health Association of Spokane.

While all three plans include cuts that will be unpopular, we believe our choices make the most sense for the long term. From here, we

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look forward to working with our colleagues in the other chamber on closing the remainder of the gap in similar fashion.

SAVING THE BASIC HEALTH PLAN

The most important act we took in the Senate's early action budget proposal saves the Basic Health Plan as a means for thousands of working people to pay for health insurance who can't afford private insurance but who are not eligible for Medicaid. Our approach is to reform the BHP by tightening eligibility and reducing the number of enrollees, while still preserving the program, continuing services for those who need it most, and protecting the infrastructure we need to be eligible for federal assistance in 2014.

So: Reform and reduce but preserve and protect.

The BHP ensures that 54,000 individuals all across the state including pregnant woman and individuals with cancer, AIDS, diabetes, liver disease, post-traumatic stress can pay for health care.

There is no question that we need to make fiscally difficult decisions to get our state out of the budget crisis and on a more sustainable path. Retaining the BHP represents the right fiscal direction, the right moral direction and the right direction for the future. Click the link to read my full blog post on this topic [*On the Basic Health Plan: Reform and reduce, but preserve and protect.*](#)

Similarly, we'll look to thread the needle between achieving savings but preserving services for those who need them most in other critical health care areas such as the Disability Lifeline for low-income individuals who are temporarily disabled and unable to work, the Children's Health Program, maternity support services and alcohol and drug abuse treatment services.



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TRY YOUR HAND AT BALANCING THE BUDGET

Budget solutions are like opinions — everyone has one. Well, here's your chance to try out your ideas by clicking on our [budget calculator](#). You not only can choose which public services you'd cut, and by how much, but you can also see just much or how little savings those reductions provide — and how close they get you to balancing the budget.

Web Site

Contact me

About the Legislature

CELEBRATING ARTS & HERITAGE DAY WITH 3RD DISTRICT ARTWORK ON DISPLAY



I'm very excited to share with you that last Wednesday, during Arts & Heritage Day here in the Legislature, local artist and 3rd District resident Ben Joyce came to my Senate office to display his incredible painting "**16,582 days to a Symphony of Brotherhood**" for the remainder of the legislative session. Here's how Ben describes the piece:

"This painting was inspired by the inauguration of President Barack Obama on January 20, 2009 and Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech back

on August 28, 1963.

"16,582 days separate these two historic events, yet it's amazing how close in proximity the two locations are, from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to the steps of the Capitol. It is inspiring to hear MLK's speech on Equality, and the fact that segregation was very real even 40 years ago, is a testament to how far our country has come.

To read more about this inspiring piece and the artist click [here](#).

Sincerely,



Click [here](#) for contact information for my Olympia or Spokane office.

